

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-315)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

2719 '99 JUN 14 A9:33

re: Labeling of irradiated foods

Gentlepeople,

I understand that you are seeking comment from the public on proposed changes to the current labeling requirements for irradiated foods, and I want to add my opinion on this issue. I am not violently opposed to irradiation and realise that the process can kill bacteria in foods that cannot be eliminated as surely except by cooking, also that irradiation can retard spoilage in certain foods. However, I am not personally convinced that this is adequate reason to purchase such food stocks. Price and convenience for food processors, handlers and purveyors are not the only things to consider. At issue is the right of the public to know whether what they are eating has been irradiated. If clearly labeled, we can individually know and decide for ourselves.

There are some very good reasons to hesitate before purchasing irradiated foods, among them are these:

1. Irradiating of food stocks may be hastening the development of resistant bacteria in the processing plants themselves.
2. We may be encouraging unsanitary food processing because the irradiation will be relied on to kill the obvious contaminants (for example partly spoiled food could be sold because no active bacteria were present).
3. Although the scientific community is largely in agreement that there is no harmful residue from the irradiation process, in the recent past opinions have changed as new data appeared. Examples have been the perception of safety in the use of pesticides, herbicides and fumigants. A prudent person has a need to maintain a healthy scepticism, especially as there is no compelling need for this new technology.
4. The expensive equipment and controls will be out of reach for the smaller processors, leading to further consolidation and control of the distribution of foods, with no advantage to the consumer.

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Harry Weitzer

46800 SW South Road

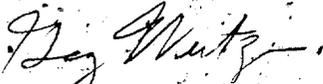
Gaston Oregon 97119

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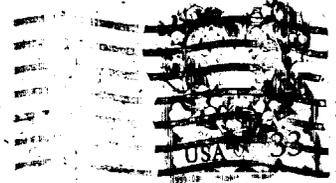
5. The mere lack of spoilage is not the only criteria for selecting nutritious food (for example vitamin content can be lost by extended shelf life).

Please add these comments to your decision process.

Sincerely,

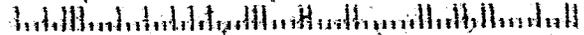


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